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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: ALBA SUMMIT: NEW MEMBERS, NEW NAME

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Venezuela hosted an extraordinary ALBA Summit on June 24, welcoming Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda to the organization. President Chavez proposed a new name for ALBA, changing the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas. Heads of state from Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Dominica joined President Chavez for the summit, held on the Venezuelan national holiday of the Battle of Carabobo. Military cadets from five ALBA countries joined the Venezuelan military in a parade commemorating Simon Bolivar's victory against the Spanish. Initially described as an organization focused on economic cooperation, ALBA is taking shape as a much deeper Venezuelan-led alliance among Latin American countries. End Summary.

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NEW MEMBERS, MORE MEETINGS  
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¶2. (SBU) Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda officially joined ALBA during the conference, increasing total membership to nine countries. Paraguayan Foreign Minister Hector Lacognata announced that Paraguay would join ALBA at the next summit, planned for September in Bolivia. In addition to the heads of state present, from Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica and the new members, senior representatives from Honduras and Cuba attended. ALBA members agreed to President Chavez's proposal to change the ALBA name to the "Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas" and announced the establishment of political, economic and social advisory councils, which will meet on a monthly basis, starting July 24. President Chavez also proposed that the heads of states meet every three months, and declared that the Organization for American States and the United Nations "do not serve our people."

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BATTLE OF CARABOBO  
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¶3. (SBU) For the first time, foreign military participated in the annual parade commemorating Simon Bolivar's victory against the Spanish Royalists in 1821. Military units from five ALBA countries joined Venezuela in marching behind national and ALBA banners: Cuba, Honduras, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Bolivar's victory in the Battle of Carabobo led to Venezuela's independence; President Chavez said on June 24 that "Carabobo has not ended and it will continue to resound as the people of America strive for their full liberty." He added that independence in Latin America began with the Battle of Carabobo, and said "the world should know that we

are ready to be free, and we will be free no matter what it costs us." Chavez also announced during the summit that the U.S. was trying to assassinate him, clarifying his statement with "I don't accuse Obama. I think Obama has good intentions but the Empire, the CIA, and its tentacles are still there."

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (C) President Chavez continues to portray himself as the leader of Latin America, and will try to use ALBA as an alternative to the Organization for American States and the United Nations. Discrediting international organizations that might criticize him is consistent with strengthening and expanding Venezuelan-led organizations. ALBA, initially presented as an economic "alternative" to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, is now taking shape as an "alliance". President Chavez also continues to sharply and publicly criticize the U.S., while carefully acknowledging President Obama's regional popularity.

CAULFIELD